DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 928 TM 810 022

TITLE	Self Study Guide for Non-Biased Assessment.
INSTITUTION	New Jersey State Dept. of Education, Trenton. Bureau of Pupil Personnel Services.: Northeast Regional Resource Center, Hightstown, N.J.
SPONS AGENCY	Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	80
CONTRACT	300-77-0537
NOTE	13p.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Diagnostic Tests: *Educational Diagnosis: Elementary Secondary Education: *Evaluative Thinking: *Special Education: *Test Bias: Test Interpretation

ABSTRACT

This self study guide attempts through a series of questions to call the reader's attention to possible sources of bias in the comprehensive assessment procedure. Beginning when someone considers the possibility that a child has an educational handicap, the questions move through preparation and assessment, scoring, interpretation, report writing and team decision-making activities. The question format was chosen and the text written in the first person singular to emphasize the individual professional responsibility of each person involved in the special education eligibility decision. Should a child study team review the guide as a group, simple modification of the language can be made. Several references are made to the child's language. The home language is the one used by the family for everyday communication. Whether the child is able to use another language easily needs to be determined before an assessment is conducted. The critical issue is whether the youngster is sufficiently fluent in English for it to be the language of communication during an assessment. (Author/RL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED196928

SELF STUDY GUIDE FOR NON-BIASED ASSESSMENT

ERIC/TM

NEW JERSEY STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TM 810 022

SELF STUDY GUIDE

FOR

NON-BIASED ASSESSMENT

FRED G. BURKE
COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

GUSTAV H. RUH
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE

BUREAU OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES
DIVISION OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS

CATHERINE HAVRILESKY
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

AND

NORTHEAST REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

NICHOLAS MALDARI
PROJECT DIRECTOR

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

225 W. STATE ST., TRENTON, N.J. 08625

1980

PTM 100.46

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

P. PAUL RICCI, PRESIDENT	VINELAND
S. DAVID BRANDT, VICE PRESIDENT	CHERRY HILL
JACK BAGAN	SALEM
WILLIAM COLON	JERSEY CITY
ANNE S. DILLMAN	PERTH AMBOY
RUTH H. MANCUSO	GLASSBORO
E. CONSTANCE MONTGOMERY	MORRISTOWN
KATHERINE K. NEUBERGER (REPRESENTING STATE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION)	LINCROFT
SONIA B. RUBY	ATLANTIC CITY
JACK SLATER	PATERSON
TIMOTHY WEEKS	SOUTH ORANGE
SUSAN N. WILSON	PRINCETON
ROBERT J. WOLFENBARGER	SUMMIT

FRED G. BURKE, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
SECRETARY

T. EDWARD HOLLANDER, CHANCELLOR OF HIGHER EDUCATION
EX OFFICIO

PUBLISHING NOTE

THIS DOCUMENT WAS PREPARED PURSUANT TO THE NORTHEAST REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER CONTRACT #OEC-300-77-0537, AWARDED TO THE NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FROM THE UNITED STATES OFFICE OF EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE, BUREAU OF EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED. THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN, DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE POSITION OR POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICE OF EDUCATION, AND NO ENDORSEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICE OF EDUCATION SHOULD BE INFERRED.

PERMISSION TO DUPLICATE THE MATERIALS IN THIS DOCUMENT IS GRANTED BY THE NORTHEAST REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER (NERRC) CONTINGENT UPON NERRC RECEIVING CREDIT FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

PREFACE

With the advent of PL 94-142 and other federal and state legislation, non-biased assessment has been highlighted as a major concern. As a result, the New Jersey State Department of Education, Bureau of Pupil Personnel Services and the Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC) have been making an on-going effort to address this issue. This document is a revised edition of the *Guide for Nonbiased Assessment* originally written in 1975, as the end portion of A Position Statement on Nonbiased Assessment of Culturally Different Children, developed by the Region 9 Task Force on Nonbiased Assessment under the auspices of the NERRC. The guide is a series of approximately 70 questions which can be used by local child study teams as a resource before, during and after the evaluation of referred children.

This guide was developed in response to increased awareness and a need expressed by child study team members now practicing in local school districts.

Many people were instrumental in shaping this guide into its final form. After original revision by a committee of New Jersey State Department of Education personnel and NERRC staff, it was reviewed by other state consultants. Comments were collated and included and a second draft was developed.

Twelve local districts participated as field test centers. They were asked to use a form to comment on the clarity, completeness and usefulness of the guide and then to forward their responses to the committee. The field test centers included rural, suburban and urban, large and small school populations, and varying grade levels from elementary through secondary. Each of the state's four special education regions had school districts participating in the field test.

The guide was developed as a self-study tool for individual practitioners. The goal is for readers to incorporate the concepts into their professional decision-making and eliminate, to the greatest degree possible, bias from their assessments. Use of the guide for monitoring or supervisory activities is not recommended. It might be used to educate those who oversee assessment, but it is rather specific and unwieldly as a review tool. In effect, the process of using the guide is intended to be analogous to the technique of programmed instruction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As coordinators of the project, we wish to express our gratitude to the many people who assisted in the development of the guide.

In particular we wish to thank the following New Jersey public school districts that participated in the field test and made valuable contributions to the document.

Camden City
Central Regional High School
Englewood
Glassboro
Hackettstown
Mansfield Township
Mercer County Special Services
Pennsgrove-Carneys Point
Roxbury Township
South Brunswick Township
West Milford

Project Coordinators

Janice E. Frost
Eileen Ware
Northeast Regional Resource Center

Patricia M. Brady
New Jersey State Department of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface..... i

Acknowledgements..... iii

Introduction..... vii

Referral..... 1

Preparation..... 3

Assessment..... 5

Scoring and Interpretation..... 7

Reports..... 7

Team Decisions..... 9

INTRODUCTION

The guide attempts through a series of questions to call the reader's attention to possible sources of bias in the comprehensive assessment procedure. Beginning when someone considers the possibility that a child has an educational handicap, the questions move through preparation and assessment, scoring, interpretation, report writing and team decision-making activities. The question format was chosen and the text written in the first person singular to emphasize the individual professional responsibility of each person involved in the special education eligibility decision. Should a child study team review the guide as a group, simple modification of the language can of course be made.

Although bias in assessment is an acknowledged problem affecting children who are members of recognizable ethnic and racial minority groups, it is not with them only that the guide is useful. Some of the most insidious prejudice that occurs is directed against social or cultural subgroups; the kids from the wrong part of town and the poor of all groups are two obvious examples of this phenomenon. It is on the basis of this belief that the guide is directed to all assessment team professionals regardless of the obvious ethnic make up of the communities in which they work.

The true value of the guide will be felt by those who use it to learn the potential sources of bias through review of a sufficient number of cases. The concepts underlying the guide questions, once integrated into a professional's thinking, become automatic considerations whenever assessment of any child is approached.

A point needs to be emphasized about the questions themselves. It is not expected that simple yes or no answers will satisfy the inquiry about possible bias. If, for example, an assessment team member does not know the answer to a question, the dictates of good professional practice require that this gap in the available information be closed before decision-making proceeds. If, however, the responses to items raise the probability that an alternate assessment approach is desirable, and the professional nonetheless elects not to pursue such an alternative, documentation of that decision is called for. The record of a child thereby would contain specific notation of the decision made and the rationale for that decision, and show that the team member is accepting professional responsibility for the choice of action.

Several different references are made within the guide to the child's language. It is necessary to point out that this variation is not accidental nor are the different terms synonymous. The home language is the one used by the family for everyday communication. Whether the child is able to use another language easily needs to be determined before an assessment is conducted. The critical issue is, of course, whether the youngster is sufficiently fluent in English for it to be the language of communication during an assessment.

REFERRAL

1. Is the referral legitimate?

   a. Does the referring agent have a history of over-referral of children from certain social or cultural groups?

   b. Is there supportive documentation of the problem?

   c. Could irrelevant personal characteristics (e.g. sex or attractiveness) of the child have influenced the decision to refer?

   d. Could the referring agent have misinterpreted this child's actions or expressions due to lack of understanding of the cultural differences between himself or herself and the child?

2. Is it possible that the curriculum being used assumes that this child has developed readiness skills at home that in reality he/she hasn't had the opportunity to develop?

3. Has a conference been held between the school staff and the parents to discuss the child's school difficulties?

4. Have this child's parents been informed in writing and by personal contact when necessary, in their dominant language, of the reason for this referral and of their due process rights?

5. Have resource people from the community been used to assist contact with the parents, if necessary?

6. If appropriate, has the student been informed of the reason for referral?

7. Has documented parental permission for the evaluation been obtained?

8. Have the parents been told that they may examine all of their child's school records?

9. Have the parents been informed that the school district will provide an interpreter if necessary?

PREPARATION

1. What special conditions about this child do I need to consider?

   a. What is the language the child uses in school?

   b. In what language(s) is the child proficient?

   c. What is the child's home language?

   d. Do I know about the child's home environment? (e.g. family constellation and social and cultural customs)

   e. Do I understand this child's culture and language so that I can elicit a level of performance which reflects the child's underlying competencies?

   f. Am I making unwarranted assumptions about this child? (e.g. Am I assuming that the child speaks and reads Spanish simply because the child is Puerto Rican?)

   g. What are the child's past educational experiences?

   h. What have been the child's experiences with members of other social or cultural groups?

2. What special considerations do I need to take into account if my personal socio-cultural background is different from that of the child?

   a. How do I feel about this child?

   b. Are my cultural values different from this child's?

   c. Will my attitude unfairly affect this child's performance?

   d. Can I evaluate this child fairly and without prejudice?

   e. If not, should I refer this child to another assessor?

3. How well can I rely on information contained in the child's school records?

   a. Am I familiar with past test instruments used to evaluate this child?

   b. Can I rely on the prior test scores?

ASSESSMENT

1. Have I considered what the best assessment approach is for this child?

2. If I have elected to use standardized instruments, have I considered all of the ramifications?

   a. Am I administering a particular test simply because it is part of THE BATTERY?

   b. Have I reviewed current literature regarding this instrument and its use with culturally different children?

   c. Does the instrument I have chosen include persons in the standardization sample from this child's socio-cultural group?

   d. Were there large enough numbers of this child's socio-cultural group in the test sample for me to use the norms?

   e. Are norms for various socio-cultural subgroups available?

   f. Does the instrument selected contain illustrations that are misleading, socially or culturally specific, or outdated?

   g. Does the instrument selected employ vocabulary that is colloquial, regional and/or outdated?

3. Has the child been adequately prepared for testing?

4. Are there factors which suggest the need to reschedule this child for evaluation?

5. Could the physical environment of the test setting adversely affect this child's performance?

6. If the child is not proficient in English, have I given instructions in the other language?

7. Have I accurately recorded entire responses to test items so that I might later consider them when interpreting the test scores?

8. Have I observed the child's adaptive behavior in settings other than the classroom?

9. Has information been obtained about the child's social interactions outside the school setting with family members, age peers and others?

10. Has information been obtained about the child's participation in organized community activities?

SCORING AND INTERPRETATION

1. Have I examined each item missed by this child rather than merely looking at the total score?

   a. Is there a pattern to the types of items the child missed?

   b. Are the items missed culturally specific?

2. Have I considered other factors in the interpretation of the child's assessment results?

   a. Have I considered the effect the child's attitude and/or physical condition may have had on performance?

   b. Have I considered the effect that rapport with me may have had on the child's performance?

   c. Have my observations of the child's behavior during testing and in the classroom been considered in the interpretation of the test results?

   d. Have I considered the effect that the testing environment may have had on the child's performance?

3. Have I used the adaptive behavior information either to support or to raise questions about the reliability of the standardized test results?

REPORTS

1. Are the reports clearly and simply written and free of jargon so that they can be easily understood by parents and teachers?

2. If appropriate, have the reports been translated into the dominant language of the parents?

TEAM DECISIONS

1. Has there been an integration and cooperative interpretation of all team members' findings into the team's conclusions?

2. Has the team given appropriate consideration to reports which the parents have submitted?

3. Is there a relationship between the socio-cultural group membership of the child and the team's decisions?

   a. Is there a relationship between the socio-cultural group membership of the child and the classification selected?

   b. Is there a relationship between the child's socio-cultural group membership and the type of placement being recommended?

   c. Is there a relationship between the child's socio-cultural group membership and the types of related services being recommended?

4. Have resource people from the community been used to assist in contacting the parents, if necessary?

5. If necessary, was there a translator available to the parents for the individualized education program planning conference?

6. Has an individualized education program appropriate for this child been developed or is the child being made to fit into an existing program?

7. Has the written individualized education program been translated into the dominant language of the parents?